

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6766
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 1051

LIMDIS

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, WB, GE, GW
SUBJECT: PRISONER EXCHANGE: VAN NORMAN EXPERIENCE IN GDR PRISONS

REF: USBERLIN 1037 AND 1038

SUMMARY. ALAN VAN NORMAN TOLD MISSION OFFICERS AND VISITIN
USB LAWYERS PFUND AND SMITH MAY 1 THAT THE HAD BEEN GENERALLY
WELL TREATED IN GDR ALTHOUGH HE WAS SUBJECTED AT TIMES TO
PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES. HE FELT DR. VOGEL HAD DONE WHAT HE
COULD FOR HIM. OBVIOUSLY A SINCERELY MOTIVATED PERSON,
VAN NORMAN LEFT GOOD IMPRESSION WITH EVERYONE HE MET IN
WEST BERLIN, INCLUDING JOURNALISTS WITH WHOM HE SPOKE FOR
FIFTEEN MINUTES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN DESCRIBING HIS IMPRISONMENT, TRIAL AND DETENTION
TO MISSION OFFICERS MAY 1, VAN NORMAN STATED THAT HIS
APPREHENSION UNDOUBTEDLY RESULTED FROM FACT THAT FAMILY
HE ATTEMPTED TO SMUGLE OUT OF EAST GERMANY HAD BEEN
UNDER CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE. SINCE THE FAMILY WAS DIS-
COVERED, AND SINCE A NOTE GEARING THE NAME OF THE PERSON
WHO ENGINEERED THE AFFAIR ("MONTGOMERY") WAS ALSO FOUND IN
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HIS CAR, VAN NORMAN SAW NO MEANS OF CLAIMING INNOCENCE OF
OFFENSE WITHWHICH WAS ACCUSED. DETENTION INVOLVED LENGTHY
INTERROGATIONS IN WHICH HE WAS, AMONG OTHER THINGS, BERATED FOR
ALLEGED SHORTCOMINGS IN US SOCIETY. AT NO TIME, HOWEVER, WAS
HE SUBJECTED TO PHYSICAL ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT. TACTICS OF PRISON
AUTHORITIES WERE BASICALLY PSYCHOLOGICAL; HE WAS, FOR EXAMPLE,
NOT GIVEN HIS MAIL, PUT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT OR NOT ALLOWED

OUTDOOR EXERCISE WHEN HE DECLINED TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. VAN NORMAN STATED THAT HE EVENTUALLY HAD TO PREPARE OVER A HUNDRED PAGES OF WRITTEN STATEMENTS DEALING ESSENTIALLY WITH PERSONALITIES HE KNEW, IN WHICH HE WAS ASKED TO DESCRIBE THEIR CHARACTERISTICS, THEIR POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATIONS, ETC. HE CHARACTERIZED HIS TRIAL AS A PRO FORMA AFFAIR IN WHICH (INsofar AS HE UNDERSTOOD THE GERMAN-LANGUAGE PROCEEDINGS) HE WAS NOT ASKED TO PLEAD GUILTY TO SPECIFIC CHARGES BUT WAS EXPECTED SIMPLY TO RECEIVE WHAT APPEARED TO HIM TO BE A PREDETERMINED VERDICT (HE NOTED, FOR INSTANCE, THAT A 14-PAGE PRINTED RESUME OF THE TRIAL AND VERDICT WAS ISSUED WITHOUT TYPOS TWO HOURS AFTER ITS CONCLUSION, WHICH SUGGESTED TO HIM THAT IT HAD BEEN PREPARED IN ADVANCE).

2. THE EAST GERMANS SEEMED TO BE VERY ANXIOUS TO OBTAIN SOME SORT OF DISMISSION OF GUILT FROM VAN NORMAN. HE FINALLY TOLD THEM "THAT IF HE HAD KNOWN THEN WHAT HE KNEW NOW, HE WOULD NOT HAVE UNDERTAKEN THE EXFILTRATION ATTEMPT." THE EAST GERMANS CHOSE TO READ THIS STATEMENT THE WAY THEY WANTED. THEY ALSO LAID SOME EMPHASIS ON THE DANGER INTO WHICH VAN NORMAN HAD PLACED THE GRAFE FAMILY BY PUTTING THEM IN THE COMPARTMENT OF A CAR WHERE THEY COULD HAVE BEEN ASPHYXIATED. VAN NORMAN SAID THAT ONE OF HIS CELLMATES HAD LATER BEEN THE WEST GERMAN WHO HAD ARRANGED AN EXFILTRATION ATTEMPT IN WHICH A CHILD HAD INDEED BEEN ASPHYXIATED AND WHICH RECEIVED WIDESPREAD CONFIDENTIAL

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PUBLICITY. VAN NORMAN ALSO INDICATED HE HAD FOUGHT BACK SUCCESSFULLY ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN HIS INTERROGATORS KEPT ASKING ENDLESSLY WHO HAD SENT HIM, VAN NORMAN BEGAN REPLYING "PRESIDENT CARTE AND ED, THE TALKING HORSE, TOGETHER." THE EAST GERMANS THEN DROPPED THIS QUESTION FROM THEIR REPERTOIRE. SIMILARLY, VAN NORMAN PUT UP A FIGHT THAT HE BE ALLOWED TO STUDY GERMAN AND OTHER SUBJECTS; FINALLY, HE WAS GIVEN PERMISSION AND OBTAINED BOOKS. DURING THE PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION, VAN NORMAN WAS FIRST SEATED IN A CORNER AND TOLD TO SIT STRAIGHT LIKE A PRUSSIAN SCHOOLBOY BEING DISCIPLINED A CENTURY AGO; HE TOOK IT FOR A WEEK AND THEN SAID HE WOULD NOT ANSWER ANY MORE QUESTIONS UNDER THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES. THE NEXT DAY HE WAS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 USBERLIN 1051

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GIVEN A CHAIR BY THE DESK OF THE INTERROGATOR AND
INTERPRETER AND OFFERED A CUP OF COFFEE.

3. VANNORMAN REVEALED THAT PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXFILTRA-
TION ATTEMPT HAD BEEN IN THE MAKING SINCE THE SUMMER
OF 1976. MONTGOMERY, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS AN AMERICAN
PROFESSOR AND A WELL-KNOWN AUTHOR OF NUMEROUS THEOLOGICAL
WORKS, HAD CONTACTED THE DIRECTOR OF AN INSTITUTION IN
ENGLAND WHERE VAN NORMAN WAS STUDYING AND HAD PROPOSED THAT THE
DIRECTOR SMUGGLE OUT THE EAST GERMAN FAMILY INVOLVED. THE DIRECTOR
DEMURRED ON GROUNDS OF HIS OWN FAMILY CONSIDERATIONS BUT SUGGESTED
THAT VAN NORMAN, WHO HAD NO DEPENDENTS, MIGHT BE WILLING TO DO
THE JOB IN HIS STEAD. VAN NORMAN AGREED FOR IDEALISTIC
REASONS; HE RECEIVED NO PAYMENT FOR HIS SERVICES ALTHOUGH
MONTGOMERY DID PAY HIS AIR FARE TO BERLIN.

4. VAN NORMAN STATED THAT HE WAS INFORMED LAST WEEK
THAT HE WAS TO BE RELEASED. NEITHER UPON HIS RELEASE NOR
AT ANY TIME PREVIOUSLY WAS HE PROVIDED WITH ANY WRITTEN
DOCUMENTS RELATING TO HIS ARREST AND CONVICTION.

5. DURING THE PERIOD OF INVESTIGATIVE CUSTODY,
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VAN NORMAN OCCASIONALLY SAW A LOWMYER ASSOCIATE OF DR. VOGEL
BY THE NAME OF HOLTMANN (PHONETIC). THESE MEETINGS ALWAYS
TOOK PLACE IN THE PRESENCE OF STATE SECURITY INVESTIGATORS,
AND VAN NORMAN WAS NOT ALLOWED TO DISCUSS HIS OWN CASE WITH HIS
COUNSEL. ONLY SHORTLY BEFORE THE TRIAL WAS HE PERMITTED
TO MEET HOLTMANN ALONE. BY THEN THE EAST GERMAN
INVESTIGATORS HAD PUT TOGETHER 180-ODD PAGES OF PAPER.
VAN NORMAN SAID HE SAW DR. VOGEL FOUR OR FIVE TIMES IN

SPITE OF THE FACT THAT DR. VOGEL VERY RARELY SEES HIS IMPRISONED CLIENTS BUT GENERALLY SENDS MEMBERS OF HIS STAFF LIKE DR. HOLTMANN TO SEE THEM. THE OTHER FRG PRISONERS WERE VERY SURPRISED AT THIS SHOW OF ATTENTION ON DR. VOGEL'S PART. VAN NORMAN, INDEED, FEELS THAT HE RECEIVED BETTER TREATMENT THAN HIS FELLOW PRISONERS INCLUDING THE FACT THAT HE WAS PERMITTED TO STUDY. VAN NORMAN SAID THAT DR. VOGEL SENT HIM A VERY LARGE CHRISTMAS PACKAGE AND OTHER PACKAGES DURING HIS IMPRISONMENT. HIS CONCLUSION WAS THAT THERE WERE DEFINITE LIMITS TO WHAT DR. VOGEL COULD DO IN A GIVEN CASE BUT THAT DR. VOGEL DID DO AS MUCH AS HE PERSONALLY COULD FOR VAN NORMAN.

6. DURING THE PERIOD OF INVESTIGATIVE CUSTODY. VAN NORMAN SHARED CELLS IN BERLIN OR GDRA WITH EAST GERMANS. ONE OF THESE WAS A MAN WHOM VAN NORMAN DESCRIBED AS THE HEAD OF THE RADIO AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY IN THE GDR WHO HAD MAINTAINED CONTACT FROM 1957-1960 WITH A WEST GERMAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE. HE HAD BROKEN OFF THE CONTACT IN 1960 BUT HAD BEEN ARRESTED IN 1977. AFTER THE TRIAL VAN NORMAN SAW NO MORE EAST GERMANS AT ALL BUT WAS ISOLATED WITH "FOREIGNERS," MOSTLY AT RUMMELSBURG PRISON. THE MAJORITY WERE WEST GERMANS ON EXFILTRATION CHARGES. THEY WERE A SEEDY LOT INCLUDING

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ONE HEROIN ADDICT AND ONE SCHIZOPHRENIC. ONE OF HIS PLEASANTER CELLMATES WAS A TOGOLESE. THE LATTER HAD DONE NOTHING AT ALL. A FRIEND OF HIS HAD GOTTEN HIS EAST GERMAN GIRL FRIEND PREGNANT AND HAD THEN LEFT EAST GERMANY. WHEN VAN NORMAN'S CELLMATE VISITED EAST BERLIN, HE HAD BEEN ARRESTED AND ASKED FOR THE ADDRESS OF HIS FRIEND. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW THE ADDRESS AND THOUGHT THE FRIEND HAD GONE BACK TO AFRICA. THE EAST GERMANS INSISTED THAT THE FRIEND WAS IN WEST BERLIN WITH AN ADDRESS THERE KNOWN TO VAN NORMAN'S CELLMATE. HE SAID HE DID NOT KNOW IT. THE TOGOLESE RECEIVED A THREE-YEAR SENTENCE FOR REFUSAL TO PROVIDE AN ADDRESS THAT HE DID NOT KNOW.

7. THERE WAS NO REASON TO DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF THIS DECENT YOUNG AMERICAN WHO QUITE CLEARLY HAD BEEN MOTIVATED BY THE DESIRE TO DO A GOOD TURN FOR HIS FELLOW MAN. HIS BASIC FORTHRIGHTNESS AND HONESTY CAME OUT CLEARLY IN THE FIFTEEN-MINUTE INTERVIEW HE HELD WITH THE PRESS OUTSIDE THE MISSION COMPOUND ON MAY 1. GEORGE

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